

GOVERNOR STEVE BULLOCK'S PROTECT MONTANA KIDS COMMISSION

MEMBERS

- **Leslie Halligan**, Missoula. (Commission Chair). Qualification: District Court Judge or Judicial Branch representative. Leslie is a Montana District Court Judge for the Fourth Judicial District in Missoula.
- **Scott Darkenwald**, Helena. Commission Vice Chair). Qualification: Department of Justice Representative. Scott is the Chief of Staff and Deputy Director of the Montana Department of Justice.
- **Sarah Corbally**, Helena. Qualification: Department of Public Health and Human Services Representative. Sarah is the administrator of the Montana Child and Family Services Division.
- **Ali Bovingdon**, Helena. Qualification: Governor's Office representative. Ali is the Deputy Chief of Staff in Governor Steve Bullock's office.
- **Bill Hooks**, Helena. Qualification: Office of the Public Defender representative. Bill is the Chief Public Defender for Montana's Office of the State Public Defender.
- **Schylar Baber-Canfield**, Butte. Qualification: organization involved in child abuse. Schylar is the outreach manager at the Montana Student Assistance Foundation.
- **Ann Lawrence**, Kalispell. Qualification: county attorney. Anne is the Flathead Deputy County Attorney in Kalispell.
- **Matt Lowy**, Missoula. Qualification: Private Attorney. Matt is the owner of Lowy Law, PLLC in Missoula and a child welfare specialist.
- **Megan Bailey**, Saint Ignatius. Qualification: tribal member. Megan is a mental health therapist at Sunburst Mental Health Community Foundation.
- **Joyce Funda**, Helena. Qualification: CASA or foster parent. Joyce is the executive director of CASA of Montana, Inc.
- **Bart Klika**, Missoula. Qualification: research experience. Bart is an assistant professor at the University of Montana School of Social Work.
- **Tom Strizich**, Qualification: pediatrician. Tom is a pediatrician in Helena.
- **Jaci Noonan**, Anaconda. Qualification: public member. Jaci is the Care and Community Treatment Director for AWARE in Anaconda.
- **Jani McCall**, Billings. Qualification: public member. Jani is the owner and president of Consulting with Communities, Inc. in Billings.

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
STATE OF MONTANA

STEVE BULLOCK
GOVERNOR



ANGELA McLEAN
LT. GOVERNOR

**Governor Bullock's Protect Montana Kids Initiative:
*Improvements to Systems Serving Children & Families***

All children deserve a safe home where they can grow and thrive. Unfortunately, cases of abuse and neglect continue to rise in Montana, straining the entire child protection system, from courts, county attorneys and tribal governments, to child protection caseworkers and court appointed special advocates.

Over the last eight years, the number of children in foster care has grown by over 75%. Cases involving drugs and alcohol have been a major source of this increase. Since 2010, the number of children in care as a result of parental substance abuse has increased by over 65%.

When a family becomes a source of harm rather than protection for a child, we have a collective responsibility as neighbors, clergy, teachers, doctors, coaches and fellow Montanans to ensure that child's safety. Critical components of that system of care include the state's Child and Family Services Division and, in the most extreme cases, judges, county attorneys, the attorney general's office, and court appointed special advocates.

System Improvements Implemented Since 2013

Over the last two years, Governor Bullock has overseen important improvements to these historically underfunded and overburdened systems, including:

- Signed into law legislation creating the Independent Office of the Child and Family Ombudsman in the Department of Justice.
- Added 14 new child protective caseworkers in 2014.
- Implemented comprehensive training programs for new and existing caseworkers and supervisors, including the three-week Montana Child Abuse and Neglect (MCAN) training that imparts the basic knowledge and skills needed to provide investigation, assessment, safety, reunification, and permanency services in accordance with state and federal law and policy.

Although important advancements have been made, Governor Bullock will continue demanding improvements to keep vulnerable children in Montana safe. His Protect Montana Kids Initiative consists of two phases that will both demand immediate changes and provide a thorough review of the entire child protection system.

- **Phase One** will be implemented immediately and include changes to improve the delivery of services to children at risk of abuse and neglect.
- **Phase Two** will include the work of the governor's new Protect Montana Kids Commission and culminate in a plan presented to the 2017 Legislature to bring more transparency to Montana's system and align state laws governing child abuse and neglect with best practices across the country.

Phase I: Immediate System Improvements

Governor Bullock recognizes that one of the State's most important obligations is to protect child victims of abuse and neglect. Efforts to improve systems serving these kids must happen on a daily basis. Although the challenges and strains on the system have been created over decades, Montana's most vulnerable children cannot afford for us to take decades to address those challenges. With these children in mind, the governor announces these immediate changes:

Increasing Capacity and Skills of Frontline Workers

Frontline caseworkers will always be the most critical line of defense for vulnerable children and struggling families. Today the governor is announcing several changes that will improve the skills, tools and capacity that caseworkers have to perform their critically important jobs:

- **Additional Staff:** The hiring of 33 additional frontline staff to relieve pressure created from dramatically increasing caseloads, thus allowing overburdened staff to better meet the needs of children and families.
- **Staff Training:** Continuous evaluations and improvements to the groundbreaking Montana Child Abuse and Neglect trainings implemented in 2013. For example, next month, a "simulation lab" is being added to the core training to give workers hands-on experience within a mock investigation.
- **Better Case Management:** The building of a new electronic case management system for frontline workers, replacing an obsolete and inefficient system that has failed to provide the up-to-date information, data, and reports necessary for ensuring child safety. The new system will ensure timely access to statewide information, improve efficiency, and allow caseworkers to spend more time working in the field with vulnerable children and families.

Bolstering Supervision and Oversight of Frontline Workers

- **Increased Supervisor Capacity:** The hiring of additional frontline staff will have the secondary benefit of reducing caseload responsibilities that supervisors have had to assume because of worker shortages. This will allow supervisors to prioritize oversight responsibilities.
- **Uniform Case Review:** Review and improvement of continuous quality improvement (CQI) checklists to be used in mandatory supervisory case reviews. The CQI checklist provides supervisors with a formalized process for monitoring compliance with statutory and regulatory timelines.

Using Evidence-Based Practices to Improve Outcomes

- **Safety Assessment and Management:** Full implementation of the evidence-based Safety Assessment and Management System (SAMS), providing statewide consistency in investigations, assessments, and family involvement and support. The SAMS model includes mandatory home visits and interviews with every member of a home where abuse is alleged.
- **Safe Care Augmented Home Visiting:** Statewide expansion of an evidence-based home visitation model used in numerous states and 22 countries that has been shown to decrease child maltreatment in high risk families.
- **Critical Incident Review Policy Team:** An incident review team within CFSD will review incidents of serious injury or death and, based on findings, make policy recommendations for immediate improvement of the child protection system.
- **Substance Abuse Funding:** Availability of more flexible funding to support services for families struggling with substance abuse, such as evidence-based sober family housing programs.
- **Increased Use of Evidenced-Based Therapies:**
 - *Trauma-Focused Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy:* A model that helps children who have experienced trauma reduce adverse consequences on their development by addressing and resolving the issues caused by that trauma.
 - *Parent-Child Interactional Therapy:* A model of therapy that includes the parent and child working together with a therapist to build healthy attachments that promote optimal development.

Increasing Stakeholder Involvement

- **Safety Permanency and Well-Being Roundtables:** Statewide expansion of roundtables that include staff and stakeholders coming together to create an action plan to reduce barriers to a child finding a safe and permanent home.
- **Public Health Nurse Partnership:** The Missoula County Public Health Department has a “Foster Child Health Program” that assigns public health nurses to children in foster care in Missoula and Mineral counties. The program works to ensure that children in foster care have a complete health assessment and a plan to address any identified health needs. The public health nurse does regular home visits to track the progress and outcomes for each child and to ensure that foster parents have support and information related to the health needs of the child. CFSD is working with other public health departments in the state interested in implementing this program to improve the health and well-being of children in foster care.

Phase II: System Review and Statutory Recommendations

Creation of the Protect Montana Kids Commission

Montana’s future depends on our collective ability to support families in crisis and protect children from harm. The system designed to intervene in these cases involves a complex patchwork of independent sources of oversight and protection, from county attorneys, judges, child protective caseworkers, law enforcement, CASAs and guardians ad litem, the Department of Justice, and independent evaluators.

Governor Bullock is creating the Protect Montana Kids Commission to examine the entire child protection system and recommend policies, practices, and services that encourage collaboration and further improve protections of children from abuse and neglect. The Commission is charged with aligning Montana’s outdated statutes to reflect best practices and with recommending legislative changes to bring more transparency to the legal processes that govern child protection responsibilities. As outlined in the executive order, the Protect Montana Kids Commission will report its legislative recommendations to the governor by March 31, 2016.

Independent Expert Review

Governor Bullock has asked Casey Family Programs to assist the Protect Montana Kids Commission by conducting a thorough and independent review of Montana’s child protection system and making recommendations for improving outcomes in child abuse and neglect cases. Casey Family Programs is a nationally recognized leader in consulting, research, and evaluation services to improve child welfare systems.

Additional Monitoring of Caseloads and Timelines

Finally, the Governor has directed DPHHS to provide quarterly updates on case load statistics and compliance with statutory timelines. Ongoing work will continue to identify ways that the department can better protect kids and implement improvements as they are identified.

**STATE OF MONTANA
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
EXECUTIVE ORDER No. 14.1-2015**

**EXECUTIVE ORDER REVISING THE COMPOSITION AND ORGANIZATION OF
EXECUTIVE ORDER No. 14-2015 CREATING THE PROTECT MONTANA KIDS
COMMISSION**

WHEREAS, the health and safety of Montana children who have been abused or neglected or are at substantial risk of child abuse or neglect is of the highest priority to our state:

WHEREAS, Montana has seen a significant increase in the number of children who have been victims of child abuse or neglect coming into foster care:

WHEREAS, the impacts of this increase in the number of children and families being served by the child protection system has resulted in delays and capacity issues:

WHEREAS, the state has statutory and moral obligations to provide services that result in improving the safety, permanency, and well-being of the children and families in these cases; and,

WHEREAS, the public perception and understanding of the child protection system is critical to effective intervention on behalf of vulnerable children and is ultimately necessary to prevent future cases of child abuse and neglect.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, STEVE BULLOCK, Governor of the State of Montana, by the authority vested in me under the laws and Constitution of the State of Montana, do hereby establish the Protect Montana Kids Commission.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of the Protect Montana Kids Commission shall be to advise the Governor on an evidence-based, comprehensive set of recommendations to align the Montana Child Protection System with national standards and best practices in the field of child welfare.

DUTIES:

The Protect Montana Kids Commission's responsibilities shall be:

1. To foster cooperation, communication, and coordinated approaches to support improved outcomes in child abuse and neglect cases;
2. To report to the Governor's office on the status of abused and neglected children and their families receiving services from the child protection system;
3. To work toward establishing permanent funding for child protection system improvement priorities;
4. To provide recommendations to the governor by March 31, 2015 regarding:
 - a. Changes in Montana child abuse and neglect statutes necessary to align them with best practices and scientific evidence regarding what is necessary to protect the best interests of children;
 - b. Structural changes and enhancements to the system that may result in improved outcomes for children and families who are served by the child protection system and lead to a decrease in the number of children in Montana being abused or neglected;
 - c. Increasing transparency in the child protection system;
 - d. The need for additional resources in the different agencies engaged in the work of protecting children, such as the Child and Family Services Division, the County Attorney's Offices, the Office of the Public Defender, the Attorney General's Office, and the Judicial Branch.

COMPOSITION AND ORGANIZATION:

The Committee will consist of up to twelve (12) members, appointed by and serving at the pleasure of the Governor, from the following categories. One of the voting members will be appointed by the Governor as Chair, and the Governor will work to ensure geographic, gender and racial diversity amongst the membership.

- Nine (9) Voting Members, one of whom will be appointed by the Governor as Chair:
 - Two members of the public, who can fit any of the categories below or who generally represents the public-at-large;
 - Montana tribal member, preferably someone with background or experience in child abuse prevention or the public service system;
 - CASA volunteer or foster parent;
 - Practicing pediatrician;
 - Person with experience or background on scientific evidence and research regarding what is necessary to protect the best interests of children;
 - Representative of an organization involved in child abuse prevention;
 - District Court Judge or representative of the Judicial Branch;
 - Private attorney with experience in child abuse and neglect cases;
 - County Attorney;
 - A representative of the Governor's Office.
- Three (3) Non-Voting, Ex-Officio Members:
 - A Representative of DPHHS, the Director or Designee;
 - A representative of the Office of the Public Defender;
 - A representative of the Department of Justice.

The Committee will be administratively attached to the Office of the Governor.

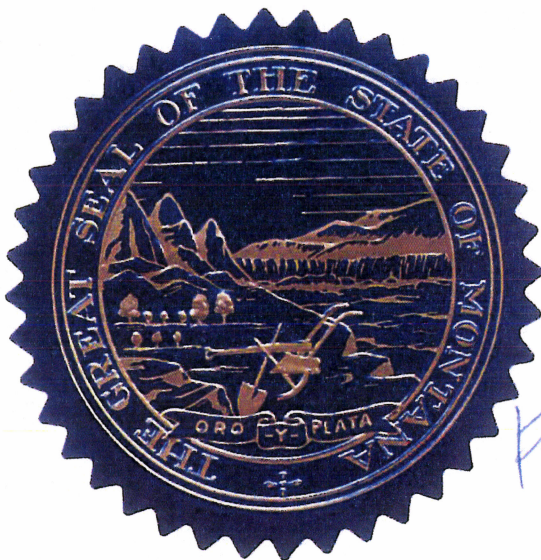
COMPENSATION:


Committee members are eligible for compensation under section 2-15-122(5) MCA, and shall be compensated in the amount to be determined by the Office of the Governor not to exceed \$50 for each day in which the member is actually and necessarily engaged in the performance of Committee duties. All eligible members shall be reimbursed for travel expenses pursuant to the same section.

DURATION:

This order is effective immediately, and the Committee shall expired or be renewed by September 1, 2017.

GIVEN under my hand and the GREAT SEAL of
the State of Montana, this 22nd day of October, 2015.




STEVE BULLOCK, Governor

ATTESTED:


LINDA MCCULLOCH, Secretary of State

for: